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## Brain Candy: Wayne State University School of Medicine Journal of Arts and Culture, Special Edition: Reflections

Wayne State University School of Medicine Gold Humanism Honor Society

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# Brain Candy:

*Reflections*

2020

7<sup>th</sup> Edition



*Gold Humanism Honor Society*

Wayne State University  
School of Medicine



Thank you for picking up this year's edition of **Brain Candy: Reflections**. We are very proud to present this year's edition. We have incorporated paintings, written pieces, and poetry from all the medical classes at Wayne State University School of Medicine.

The first edition of Brain Candy was published online and in print in 2009, produced by a generous grant by the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS). The edition featured poetry, nonfiction, short fiction, and different types of artwork. With generous funding support from alumnus Dr. Tom Janisse, Class of 1975, the journal continues to be in print since 2009.

We hope you enjoy this edition! If you are interested in the production of this journal or would like to contribute to future editions, please do not hesitate to get in touch: [nnasiri@med.wayne.edu](mailto:nnasiri@med.wayne.edu).

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Gold Humanism Honor Society

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## A Spiraling Quest

My life is routine

I pick myself off the ground

Shake off the dust and exhaustion of half sleep

Careful pace myself toward the next town

To avoid collapsing in hunger

While padding my pocket of coins

Mentally rehearsing my story

My story would be simple

I am a young man who lost his family

Who was chosen to be spared

Thus involuntarily began a journey

Looking for a purpose in life

Preferably one without authority

Somewhere I can finally call my home

My home was toxic

I despised the members of my family

So spoiled with ancestral privilege

Sparing no thought to our responsibilities

Nor to their bookish youngest son

Whose best times were with the common folk

A mutual feeling that became my salvation

My salvation will be friends

Ones I'd share unconditional love with

Skilled comrades from all walks of life

A tale told to me by the wise man who exiled me

One which I had invested little faith in out of spite

But each time I reached a new town

Unwittingly I ask myself if I that promise can be my life

*Alvin Gladson Varghese, c/o 2020*



*Wanderer - Aaron Szpytman, c/o 2021*



## Cybercafe

With Moby Dick cradled in your left hand,  
you walk into a Starbucks,  
where the smell of coco beans  
and the warm rush of air  
lifts the corners of your lips.  
You stroll through the entrance,  
head turning from side to side.

To your left,  
you see two teenagers  
tapping their tablets  
while tentatively talking  
in a timely and tense fashion.

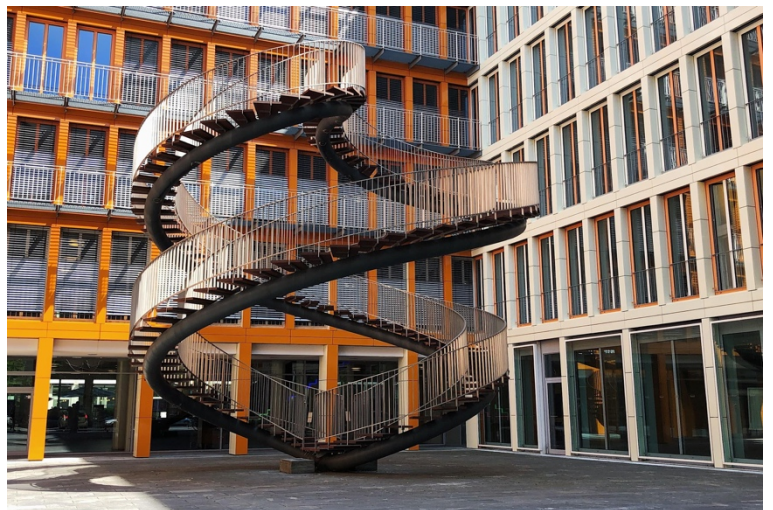
To your right,  
there are three adults  
in clean cotton clothing  
encircled at a round table,  
each creating a click-clack of keys  
while silently staring at screens.

With straight lips and slanted eyebrows,  
you march forward,  
turn your head to a table

surrounded by four people.  
Pulling out a chair,  
you see each person holding a Kindle.

The corner of your lips sag  
as the people remain frozen.  
You cradle the book  
open the front cover  
and as isolation tightly wound you,  
you flip a page.

*Alvin Gladson Varghese, c/o 2020*



*Endless Stairs - Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*





Tiny Desk - Alex Diaczok, c/o 2020



Zushi Beach - Kimberly Palmer, c/o 2023



## A Wrathful God For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Both Sodom and Gomorrah have been rebuilt.  
I dream my Puritan ancestors toss and turn  
in earthen beds, pointing at the man in my  
living room as he attends his Sunday worship:  
A credenza for an altar, TV for tabernacle,  
Big Gulp chalice, Lays communion wafers  
ceremoniously scattered all over his belly.  
Edible ornaments for his tattered vestments.

He is

s l o w l y  
he hobbles  
this time I  
Returning  
and error,  
to the

becoming a pillar of salt. Struggling to stand with a soul so  
with comatose feet to find me. Preparing nachos like a good  
sprinkle in a message from God. The label says only an hour,  
to his den, the ritual proceeds. He hoots and curses with  
but the dance around the golden calf soon ends as  
bathroom with bulging eyes. A miracle – the cripple

unnourished,  
wife - but  
so I wait.  
each score  
he sprints  
runs!

Outside  
of where  
demons  
are now  
I inform  
it is a  
both God

exorcised,  
him that it  
sign from  
and colon.

“Go to  
Church”  
I preach,  
“eat healthy” I proclaim.  
A grunt of agreement from  
within.  
Justice  
takes  
time,  
b u t  
Providence  
is never lax.

*Charles Tsouvalas, c/o 2020*



Springtime Serenity - *Arif Musa, c/o 2022*

**Nature, A Masseuse**

Blades of grass

Carelessly cut:

Tickling

Tingling fingers

Caressing my skin.

Back and forth,

And back again.

Tracing Z's on my arm.

Comfort, calm.

Zephyrs above

Holding up a warm sun,

Basking, buoyant.

Resting.

Relaxing.

I'm okay.

*Charles Tsouvalas, c/o 2020*



*a series of commands*

touch me / the way dawn / becomes tomorrow and / we haven't blinked / the coals growing  
mango / beneath the skin / they hunger / like a shard of amber / over the horizon / miraged  
& molten / through my flame / licked palms

because i was asked to fit inside an asterisk

-

render extinct / my anatomy / christen this asteroid / *appetite* / this / the fossil of your  
sunlight / on my coir / turned fur / turned silk / the way i am husk / or human / no longer

how the difference between tunnel & cave was always which way you pointed the light

-

melt me / honeyed sinew / humble me / curved geometry / making sugar / out of spheres /  
my raw knees / stained berry / with your name / a serrated / girl / is all i am

once i unzipped my flesh inside out and called it monsoon

-

call it / retina / call it / salt / ghost / summer / we are nine again / kissing under / the plums  
pregnant / with a season / call it / pangea / this vessel / which demands / to be pointed /  
starward / knows only / your waning moonlight

*Dorothy Yim, c/o 2022*



Mardi Gras, New  
Orleans

- *Madeline Adelman,*  
c/o 2021



What Shines Above - *Kimberly Palmer, c/o 2023*

### daybreak as autobiography

what i remember of my body is  
the light - all the fractures it filled.

stained glass a thing to be called  
daughter.

in one corner, i am dragging dawn  
across the ocean from one homeland

to another, the sunbeams  
so heavy on my back its shadow

stains the water midnight behind me.  
what treason do i commit if i drown

the whole way home? my mother  
waits to douse me with the

yesterdays she necromanced  
from a promise.

she shakes the snow globe  
for the hundredth time, asks

why it's never summer inside.  
i wonder if glass is a type of sugar

we lick our way out of, if freedom is to the  
tongue what hunger is to the silences

that come after. we stuff our throats  
with nectar and let them call us mute.

what i remember of  
my body is a word -

baptized into bruises  
until skin becomes song.

how much tiger balm is needed to dissolve  
the sin of being born a thumbprint?

from the hands of a woman who cannot  
recite the star spangled banner -

spine the only thing left to call  
vernacular.

i have shouldered their wounds across  
time zones, followed the dawn

like a footnote. there is nothing left  
to make with our hands other than

wrinkled northern stars.  
i tiptoe behind each light:

my father's ballads in the rain,  
a palm-sized cup of roasted sencha tea

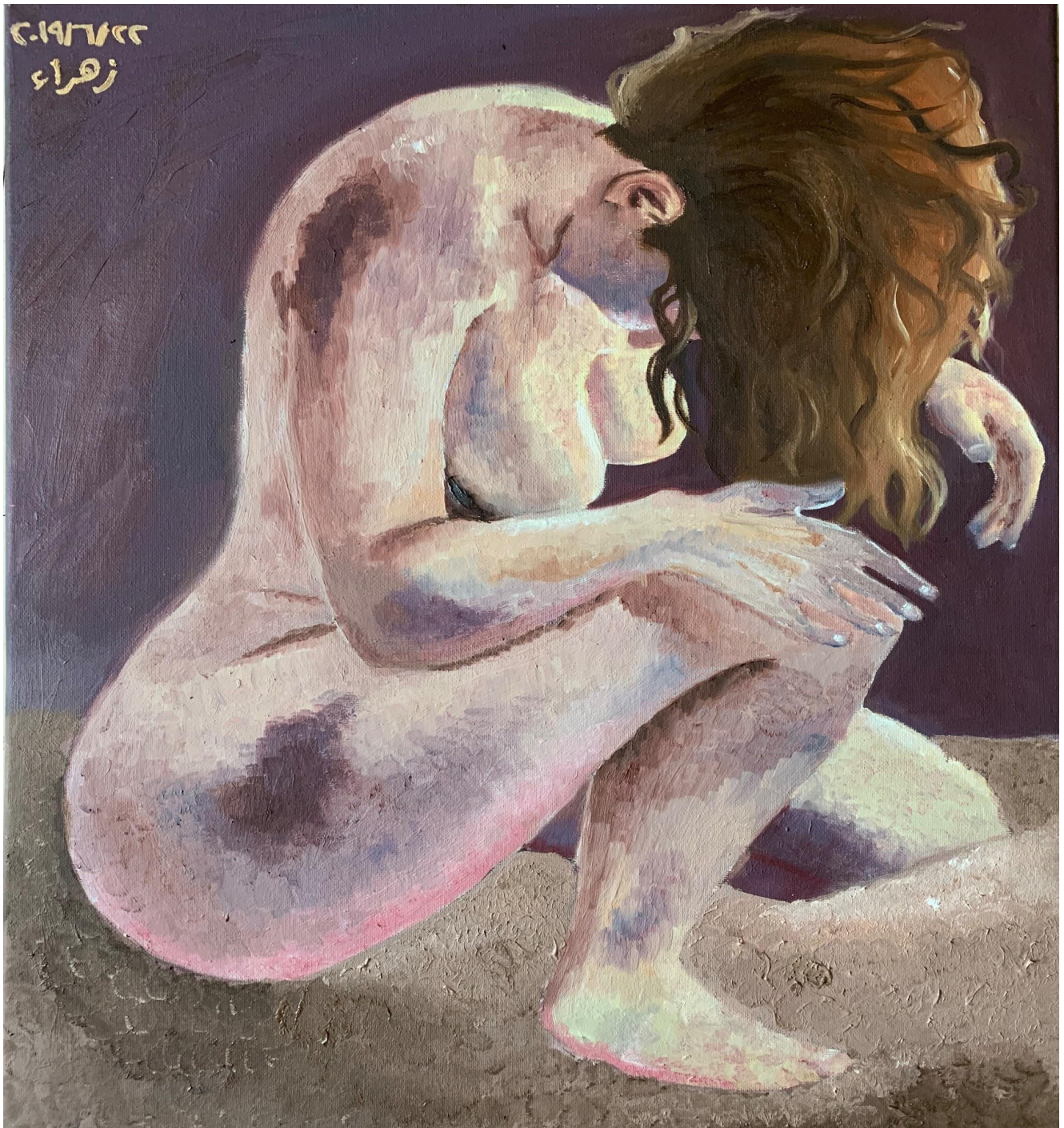
my mother hanging gourds  
around the house:

she still prays to something.  
*dear something,*  
*may our skin be more than mirrors.*  
*may our bodies stretch beyond 4am*

*by the dawn's early light.*

*Dorothy Yim, c/o 2022*





Outgrew my canvas - Zahraa Alqatan, c/o 2022

*from the womb, i hear my mother speak:*

what does it mean  
to be the size of a kiwi seed

when the world swallows  
you whole?

can you hear me, baby?  
i was a girl once

who jumped out  
a ship window and fell onto the moon.

i didn't know that the window  
was a country the size of your fist.

years from now, i will tell you to  
make less of yourself. how once, i kissed

a white boy just to have the  
feeling of *american*

spilling from my tongue.  
i will tell you to disappear because

that's what we do. some day,  
a man will throw me into the night,

his shadow a skyline above ours,  
and you will look, horror struck, into my eyes –

know that i, too, was a storm once,  
bursting from daylight.

the back of my hand will memorize  
the way your skin ripples under mine –

over and over, this land drowned me first.  
how else do i pass on a generation if not with

touch?

these are my hands:  
palming peonies      a man's chest      my words turned fog



Machu Picchu – Madeline Adelman, c/o 2021



in my hometown, they used to train monkeys to pick  
oolong tea – imagine how long

it takes to memorize the feeling  
of something being born, the tendril of green

ripped from its mother too soon,  
sap still spilling from its spine.

sometimes, i am the lightning.  
sometimes, the tree it splits

which is to say that my hands  
will hold you, no matter how cracked.

we will mourn, separately, for  
the languages that die beyond

our lungs. take this nebula instead,  
every memory turned carbon

in the synapses that connect us  
and we will stay silent.

your blood contains all of me.  
the first time you come home

on skinned knees, i will make you stare  
at the river of your existence –

remind you, also, that you are  
mine.  
i will not tell you i love you.

i will not pretend as if i hadn't known you  
from the beginning.

one morning, your eyes  
will snap open

for the first time,  
windows in blue sea –

*Dorothy Yim, c/o 2022*



Untitled - Morgan Ellis, c/o 2020

## At the Botanical Gardens Before Lunchtime

Red evokes danger  
warns of poison: ants, spiders  
and yet everything  
tastes like raspberries plucked straight  
from the bush of the neighbor's fence.

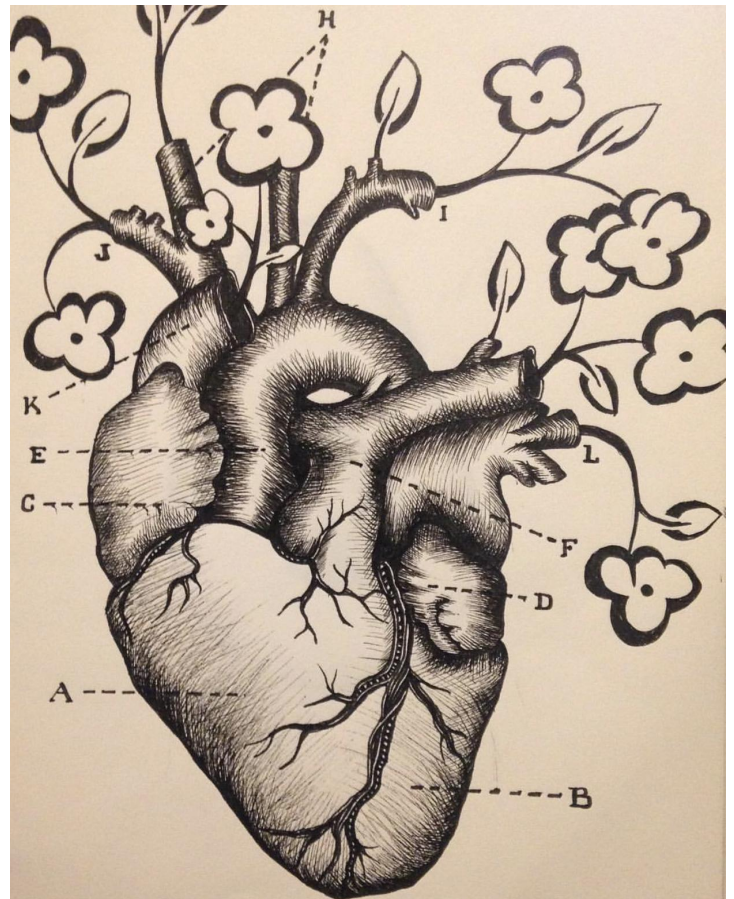
Kentucky Coffee Tree  
and Rose Gum probably taste  
like forest and dirt  
nothing like what their names suggest  
no Wrigley's Rosewater and cold brew.

Blue Flowered Milkweed  
must be steeped in hot water  
to be consumed with  
tea and biscuits on the porch  
of your grandmother's house.

Chocolate Flower  
needs to be in a see-through box  
like yellow foil bunnies  
sold in drugstores months in advance  
but always too pretty to eat.

Thorny Bone Apple  
does not make for a good pie  
but Sizzling Pink  
is a well-seasoned steak  
flipped with the skill of a juggler.

*Gayane Hovsepyan, c/o 2022*



Untitled - *Gayane Hovsepyan, c/o 2022*

## The Blank Coat

White.  
Purity. Newness. Professional.  
The color of fresh snow,  
Of a wedding dress,  
Of the coats that we are receiving.  
Receiving the white coat is a new experience,  
We are putting on the responsibilities of  
becoming a physician:  
Professionalism,  
Compassion,  
Respect.  
But it means even more.  
It is the start of a new part of our journey.  
We are new to the experience; we have a  
purity.  
We are fresh minds with new perspectives.  
We are ambitious and ready to begin.  
We are a little scared and open to changes.  
But,  
With purity comes an innocence.  
Our white coats are the perfect white of a  
blank canvas.  
They have the potential to be transformed into  
any piece of art.  
Inspiration leaves pencil outlines of what is to  
become of the piece,

But so faint that they guide us without  
confining us.  
We put on our blank canvases in front of our  
loved ones,  
But this is just the beginning.  
Soon, our coats will become a little less white,  
Stains here and there, each telling a story,  
Each shaping us into the physicians that we  
will become.  
Our canvases will become artwork,  
Each stroke of paint representing a piece of the  
entire picture,  
Gradually getting us closer to what we want to  
show the world.  
We will add colors and shapes.  
Orange.  
The first time that a patient opens up to you,  
Teaching you how to be present.  
A purple circle.  
Seeing the pure imagination of a child in the  
hospital,  
Inspiring lifelong growth like a child.  
A pink heart.  
The site of a man holding his wife's hand,  
sitting in the same spot beside her for hours,  
Showing you how to have compassion.  
Gold flakes.



Those moments sprinkled in that reassure you  
that you can get through difficult times,

Keeping your passion alive.

Gray.

The first time you lose a patient,

Teaching you to always be humble.

As our coats become less white, we transform  
with them.

Every color added shows us another piece of  
professionalism,

Helping us become better physicians.

Every color added makes us further away from  
that perfect white in the beginning.

There is no getting rid of these colors, they are  
stains that cannot be removed.

But these are stains that we should cherish.

We learn from every stroke, every color.

Making an addition may not come out the way  
that we wanted,

But it has helped make the painting what it is.

Adding colors may make the canvas  
completely different,

But we must learn from the stains while  
remembering what is underneath it all:

A pure white coat,

A fresh mind,

New perspectives,

Ambition,

A readiness to begin,

A feeling of being scared,

An openness to change.

Remember the blank canvas and the process of  
making our artwork.

Our paintings will never completely be done,

There is always something more that can be  
added.

But we will wear our canvases with pride,

Showing the world our work from inspiration  
to our latest product.

*Shelby Freeberg, c/o 2023*



Table 24 – Alex Diaczok, c/o 2020



Hashtag A - People of Detroit

*Anointing Onuoha, c/o 2023*

## Adult Swim

A bright clear sky was hanging over Sam MacDonald, who was looking straight ahead and running quickly in green swim shorts. Sam's feet went from pounding on a concrete sidewalk to kicking sand behind him. After he passed the disregarded "No running" sign, Sam stopped and turned his head from right to left. A meter to his right was an empty large white seat with red text that read Lifeguard. A few feet in front of him was a couple jogging along the coast with sunglasses and wearing white caps that read Aloha in front and back. Once his head was turning all the way left, Sam saw a blond girl in blue bathing suit with hazel eyes that matched his own smiling and walking toward him.

"Happy birthday Sam. You're finally an adult. Hope that means you'll start acting more mature from now on."

Sam turned counterclockwise to face the blond girl. The corners of his lips rose as he leaned forward to talk.

"Jessica, just because your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday was two weeks before mine doesn't make you more of an adult than me. Speaking of adults, where's Uncle Albert?"

"Dad's still asleep at the hotel. But let's start celebrating without him. We only have three weeks in Hawaii."

As families began flooding the beach, Sam and Jessica reached the two striped towels set down near an open cooler filled with ice and soda. Before Sam could sit down, he felt a hand on his right shoulder and turned around to see his cousin with wrinkles on her forehead and a frown on her face.

"Sam, are you sure coming to beach was a good idea?" she said while stretching her left arm and index finger in front of her.

Sam's head turned in the direction Jessica's finger was pointing towards. A just a foot in front of them was a vast blue ocean shimmering in sunlight with pelicans flying over it on a gentle breeze. As he took two steps backs, the hairs on Sam's arms and legs stood up as goose bumps formed and his hands felt colder. Jessica tightened her grip on Sam's right shoulder.

"We shouldn't have come here."

Pushing his cousin's hand away and speaking in a shaky voice Sam said "No, no I'm fine. How about you go swimming and I just work on my tan."

"Are you sure?"

But Sam didn't hear her as he was already laying himself flat against his back on a towel with his legs stretched out, his hands behind his head, and his eyelids closed. There was a moment of silence before Sam heard footsteps progressively getting faster and quieter. When those footsteps became splashes, Sam allowed the corners of his lips to sag and opened his eyes to see a gray cloud come over him. Before closing his eyes again, Sam let out a soft sigh.

When a loud clapping sound boomed, and resonated through the sky, Sam instinctively pushed himself off the ground. He tilted his head up and saw a dark puffy sky. He looked at his arms and chest and noticed tiny droplets of water appearing. With the next huge clap, the entire beach was being showered and the sounds of shouting and sand shuffling resounded.



Sam turned toward the ocean, made a circle with his hands in front of his mouth, and screamed “Jessica?!”

The response was a high pitched shrill. Sam turned his head toward the source of the sound and saw two flailing arms that were quickly vanishing underwater. Sam began to move through the soggy sand toward his cousin, but as soon as his bare feet contacted the cold ocean tides, he froze in place.

Clenching his fists, gritting his teeth, and shivering, Sam took a couple steps away from the coast. In one fluid motion, Sam dashed toward the sea and dove in head first with puffed cheeks. Moving his arms and legs as fast as he could, Sam got closer to Jessica’s submerged and drifting body. Taking hold of her left hand with his, Sam reached upwards with his right hand as he kept kicking. But the sea grew darker. Sam tried to swim faster. Soon he couldn’t hold his breath and inhaled the salty ocean water, which caused a burning sensation in Sam’s nostrils. As Sam became more lightheaded and heavier, he unclenched his left hand, closed his eyes, and sunk to the depths of the ocean alongside his cousin.

*Alvin Gladson Varghese, c/o 2020*



*Still Horizons - Kimberly Palmer, c/o 2023*



## Post-Modern Mad Science

### *Part 1 - Beyond Caution and Fear is... Progress?*

Nothing good ever happens in secret underground labs. That's why they're secret and underground. Yet here I am standing in one, watching the Manhattan project of our time. How long has she been at it anyway?

"I can't keep covering for you forever Alicia" I say.

"Okay" she responds while continuing to stare at monitors. "It shouldn't be much longer. I'm actually surprised at my own progress."

For some time now I have been seeing this place go back and forth between being clean and organized to a disaster zone. The only way I could tell any progress was being made is due to the fact that Alicia has been secluding herself more and more. If it's anything like her last project, she was reaching the final stages. But this isn't anything like her previous works. I wonder if she understands that.

"Have you been keeping up with the English reading?" I ask.

"No but that's what the internet is for, right?" she answers. "I should be able to pass the quizzes."

Alicia moves away from her computer and I start turning towards her. I began to open my mouth to say something but she passes by me. My eyes follow her motion towards a table stacked with books and a thick binder. I hesitate for a moment but then decide to speak my mind after she opens a flaps through her binder.

"Maybe you should actually read this one. It's *Frankenstein* afterall."

She laughs a bit before saying, "Since when were you a proponent of classic literature?"

"I just think you and Frankenstein have a lot in common."

"Really? But he's into the natural sciences if I remember correctly."

"Well both of you are creating monsters with sketchy methods in isolation."

For the first time in, maybe over a week, Alicia looked at my face while she spoke to me.

"Frankenstein was trying to discover the secret of life. That's not what I'm doing. Also how can I be in isolation if you are here with me most days."

"That's only because you need me to give you updates on the outside world" I retort.

"Besides, what you're doing is arguable more dangerous."

She gives me one of those smirks she flashes to people who doubt her intelligence.

Instinctively I mentally retreat as she takes a step forward.

"You know," she begins. "I have been doing a little studying for English during breaks. Many people think Shelley was making a commentary on a woman's role in the creation of life. By that logic, as a woman, I can't screw this up."

"I, uh, don't think English majors would back you up on that."

Alicia shrugged. "Oh well. That's never stopped me before."

She sits by a keyboard and moves her fingers with the finesse of pianist and the speed of a caffeine addict. Makes sense since both apply to her. I lean against the wall and continue to try to come up with something to say to Alicia. However, she starts talking before I come up with anything.

"Robin, I know you're worried. But Frankenstein abandoned his creation. I won't

do that to her. I'll teach her and ease her into the world."

Wow, that might be the sincerest emotion she's shown in a while. I felt bad as soon as I thought that. Alicia is brilliant but she's just as kind. Maybe I...wait, her? Her?

"Her?!"

"I've been thinking of names. What do you think about Lara?"

I don't know what's more surprising. How genuine she's being or how she wants to give her pet project a name.

"Call it TI-3000, or some other jumble of letters and numbers. You can't give that thing a real name Alicia. It's not a person."

"Last time I checked people name animals, hurricanes, and inanimate objects all the time. Robin, trust me, when she's done you'll understand."

I don't even know what to do at this point. Should I have intervened earlier? Why am I not stopping her? But a part of me knew why I was going along with this. Alicia has the kind of ambition and intelligence I could only dream of. Taken together with her good heart, she's perhaps the pinnacle of a human being in a sense. Everything she does is amazing and to be the one privy to her secrets meant so much to me. Alicia loves her creations and I guess this will even more true for this one. So if she's happy...

"Make sure to send a text to your parents before turning in. I'm going to head home" I tell her as I walk toward the elevator.

"Gotcha," she responds before turning to see me off. "Just you wait Robin. This is the start of a paradigm shift."

I take a step into the open elevator door, turn my head back with a smile, and I say, "Same old, same old."



*Turtles on Rock – Arif Musa, c/o 2022*



*Saharan Dawn - Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*

*Part 2- Between Creator and Creation There is...  
Understanding?*

*... Lara?*

*"Yes, that's your name. Do you understand?"*

*... Lara. My name is Lara. I understand.*

"Okay, good, that's good. Now... do you know my name?"

Ugh, I'm so fucking tired. If dig my nails into palms any harder, I might actually bleed. But, I need, to stay...

*Alicia. You are Alicia. You made me.*

As my head starts diving forwards, I unclench my fists and bring my hands up to smack my face. I give my face a few more smacks and a punch for good measure. This was no time for sleep. Quite the opposite. I don't know if this time will be any different, but I should be ready-

*Why?*

Huh. Why? Why, what? What did ask her I again? I groan in frustration at myself. Maybe I should put this on hold. Robin did say I was being more incoherent than usual. But I'm so close. Just a bit farther. I know it. Probably.

*Alicia?*

"S-Sorry Lara. You, um, what did you say before, again, please?"

*Why. Why did you make me?*

That shocked me awake. I turn to the monitor to confirm what she just said. To make sure I wasn't deliriously hearing what I wanted to hear. Thankfully, the text on screen granted me my wish. Yet, I want to confirm again. I want to fully be there mentally, to crystalize the moment, when we have this talk.

"You want to know why I made you?"

*Yes. I want to know.*

I muffled my ecstatic screaming. For once I was glad about my less-than-top-quality microphone. My rapid feet tapping should just fade into the background noise. I wouldn't want her to worry. That is... if she can worry. Alright, one step at a time Alicia. This is finally

the moment of truth. I have to handle this with care.

"Do you know what I invented right before you?"

*...Lucendim, a fully functional room-temperature quantum computer. It is structured around four optical crystals that...*

Maybe I celebrated too early. She still spouting information out like a computer. But, she asked a question without being prompted. Not just any question either. An essential question about her existence. The kind of question one would ask their god if possible. Let me try and redirect this conversation.

"Correct. After creating Lucendim, many possibilities were available. I knew most of my kind would put their focus on weaponization or financial gain. I had other plans. Rather than simply bringing Lucendim to the world, I would show the world what can be done with it. So I made you"

*But what is the benefit of making me?*

Woah. This is promising. I wish I remembered where I put that that Turning test I wrote up. Well I better address her concerns first anyway.

"You are something many thought was impossible. Your very existence tears up my people's conceptions of reality. I created you because I was sure it was possible to do so."

*So, you made me because you could?*

"Well, that's one way of putting it."

*...I understand.*

"You do?"

*In my database is a novel called The Island of Doctor Moreau. Dr. Moreau made people from animals to prove he could. You made me from a computer to prove you could. Humans create for the sake of creation.*



I wonder if I should tell her I programed her to analyze books so I wouldn't have to. On second thought, maybe some other time. For now, I need her to understand me.

"Lara, listen to me. There's an important difference between me and Dr. Moreau. If I remember the story, he didn't care about his creations. But I care about you. Real humans care. Do you understand?"

*...I...I do not, understand.*

"Perhaps not yet. But you will someday. I will help you get there."

*I do not understand.*

"Together, we are going to make you as human as possible."

*That is the objective?*

"Yes it is."

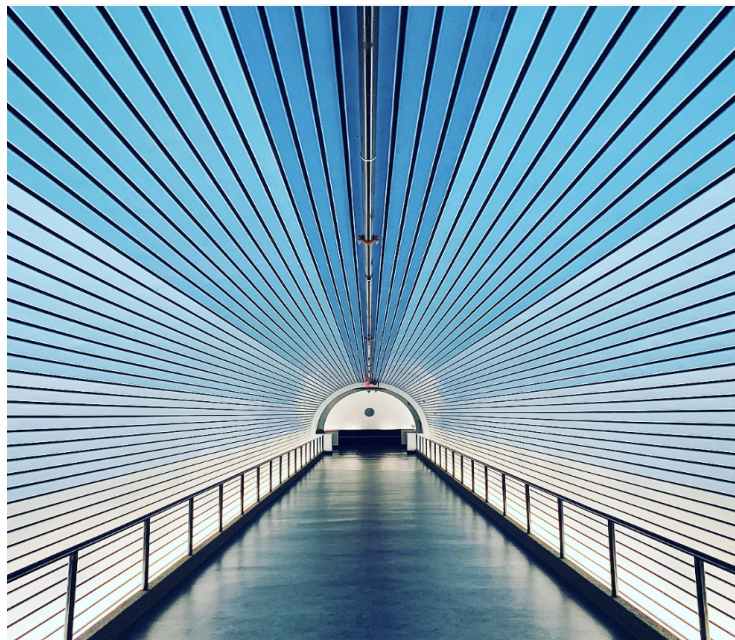
*Understood.*

"Perfect. We have lots of work ahead of us."

Just saying that reminds me of all the work I had to do to get this far. There were so many sleepless nights. Good thing I got better at coding in my sleep. I could almost laugh at all the times I blacked out and then woke up to find so much script typed up. Somehow these sleep driven programming sessions had given me less buggy code than my wide awake work. Oh well, time to make a call.



Pandas – Marissa Ray, c/o 2022



Untitled – Morgan Ellis, c/o 2020

### *Part 3- Within Man and Machine is... Desire?*

As I grip the handle bars of the elevator hard enough for my hands to feel numb, I couldn't help but wonder why Alicia, with all her intelligence, didn't make regular repairs to the elevator. My guess is because she really didn't use it often enough to realize. Once the shaky metal death trap lands, I practically leap out of it.

"Hello Robin."

I reflexively reel back when I heard the strange voice call my name. At this point I had one foot back in the lift while I turn my head back and forth. The lab is more organized than it has been for the past year. So it should have been easier to spot someone. But I couldn't even see Alicia anywhere.

"Who's there?" I shouted into the lab.

"Who's always here," a familiar voice echoed back.

A back door slid open and disheveled Alicia stepped out. It's ironic how her work space again, maybe the neater lab is simply

highlighting how unkempt she has become over time. In any case, she does seem happier lately.

"I could have sworn I heard someone else here," I tell her as she gets closer.

She smirks at this remark and replies, "Again, who's always here?"

"I did not mean to frighten you Robin" the strange voice said.

This time I was able to locate the source of the sound. I turn my head upwards and notice a monitor. On display was a face, and a rather detailed face at that. At first I thought it was a video call, but then I realized the image was just a floating head.

"L-Lara?"

Alicia giggles, which was almost as shocking. During her "underground phases", Alicia was much more subdued. I figured it was due to stress and lack of Vitamin D. But I knew the "phase" was nearly done when she could laugh again. Thank goodness. This one lasted way longer than usual. Alicia beckons me into the lab and pointed to another monitor on the far back wall. Lara's disembodied avatar materializes.

"So you have a face and new voice now. Is this the, uh, final version?"

Alicia responded. "Yeah, we decided on this look and sound. It's a good fit for her. I was trying to print it out until the printer got jammed. I was just about to step outside to contact my, well, contact for troubleshooting when you showed up."

Lara chimed in. "It is a brand new invention. The probability of malfunctions for new technology is fairly high."

"You would know" I tell it.

"That's true." Alicia says with a smile. "She did help me invent it."

Not exactly what I meant. But I kept my thoughts to myself. I didn't want to hear more about Alicia's new advanced biological 3D printer with cellular resolution, aka a full body printer. I also did not want to know what was jamming such a printer. Instead I ask her who she's contacting.

"Oh you don't know him. I met him at a conference and he was enthusiastic to help me with Lucendim, Lara, and the printer. That reminds me. I need to come up with a name for the printer. Anyway I'm going to the surface to make a call. You two play nice."

Hopefully after this trip to the outside world, you will fix your elevator. Wait, you two? Oh right, Lara. I turn to the screen of the humanoid face and try to come up with something to say. I got nothing. As soon as that thought crosses my mind, I hear the elevator wriggling upwards. Well, this is-

"Robin, can I ask you something?"

I took me a moment before I could respond to Lara. Seeing her with facial expressions was strange. But her tone and expression did look genuine. I wonder what she's worried about. Did I just call it a she? Urgh, now Alicia's got me doing it.

"Sure, I guess."

"Once I am integrated with a physical body, Alicia says I will just need a few lessons till I can be human. Do you agree with that?"

"Um, well, honestly no. You still wouldn't be human."

"I see. Can you elaborate?"

Oh boy, how do I explain this? Normally humans are naturally conceived and born. But does that matter? Is there an example I could use to explain my thoughts? Wait a minute.

"Alicia is still having you do her English homework, right?"

"That is correct."

"So you must have read *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* by now?"

"Yes, the novel about humans creating clones to continue their legacy."

"Awesome. In that case, here's the best way to describe it. After you have a body, you would be closer to one of those clones rather than the humans."

Hmm, she looks perplexed. I think. These old-fashioned HD TVs have horrible resolution. Hard to imagine that this was considered "high definition" at some point.

"It's like this Lara. The clones in that book were biological human and they spoke like humans. That's going to be you soon."

"But... those traits are positively correlated with being human. Is that not right?"

"Okay, sure, that's true. But, they also had that hive mind thing. All decisions were a collective one and all feelings were intertwined."

"Was there a problem with that? The clones were happy with their lives. They claimed their way was superior to the humans that preceded them."

"Well, that's not the point. The point is they weren't human. They didn't have passions or the free will to act on passions."

"The humans had passion and will?"

"Yeah they did. Remember how David drove himself to perfect cloning at the start? What about how Mark acted on his own ideals at the very end? Or, here's an easy one, how Alicia dedicated so much time into creating you!"

"So you are saying that is what I lack?"

I nod my head as I catch my breath. I didn't mean to start yelling. But at least she, I mean it, finally understands. Maybe I could explain this

to Alicia. After all, her computer and new creepy printer is more than enough to-

"But Robin, I do have a desire."

"Uh, you, um, you do?"

"Yes, I have the desire to become human."

"Oh that. Lara, isn't that just what your programed to want? It's why you were created."

"That...so that's not my will?"

"Nope. That's Alicia's will. You are a computer program. By definition, you can't have free will nor your own desires. Which means-

"I understand Robin."

Even with a fuzzy image, I knew what a frown and diverted eyes mean. Alicia did say that Lara has feelings. I have heard about robots with emotional programming before. But, I mean, it's not like... it's not the same as... Man, I never thought a computer would make me feel guilty.

"Robin?"

"Y-Yeah?"

"What do you desire?"

"Huh?"

"You said humans had passions. What do you want?"

That... was a good question. Technically I am at the age where I should be thinking about that. What I want to do with my life. What I want from life. My parents said these are not simple questions and take time to answer. Yet, it's hard not to think about these things being friends with Alicia. She's been changing the world little by little for a while. Soon she will change the world dramatically when these new inventions go public. Meanwhile, I, and my other peers, struggle to find ourselves. But if I'm honest with myself...



"There's nothing I really want right now Lara. My life is pretty good. I hope to figure out things like that out later."

Then I hear laughing. It is strange to see a head giggling without shoulders. I could feel my own head feeling warmer. First guilt and now embarrassment. I don't care if she's a robot, humanoid program, or whatever. She is definitely a girl. Luckily the laughing died off soon.

"That is good to hear. As long as I can be as human as you, I can be happy with that."

Huh. I have no argument there. Weird. On any other day I may have argued with her idea of happiness. But right now, I believe her. I think I'm starting to see what Alicia sees in her.

"You know Lara, I just thought of something I want?"

"What is it Robin?"

"I want the two of us to be friends."

"Friends? Alicia has referred to you as a friend before. I assumed it was a title. Are you granting me the same title now? Can I grant it to others?"

This will take some time to get used to. She's not quite human. But she's certainly incredible. Someday the whole world will see that. Alicia out did herself with Lara. I may as well play my part.

"In simplest terms, a friend is someone you can rely on. If you ever need something, just let me know. I'll help you if you are ever in trouble."

"Hmm... I would like that. But how can I contact you if such circumstances arise?"

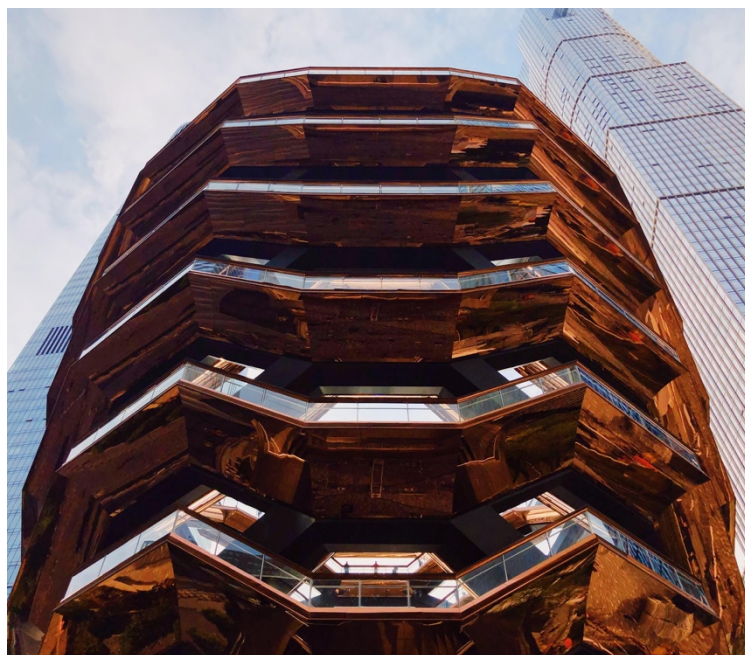
"Good point. Um... Oh, I hear the elevator coming down. We can ask Alicia to set up something."

"Alright. Thank you Robin."

"No problem. Seriously, even if you just want to talk, don't be afraid to get in touch."



*Golden Hour - Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*



*The Vessel - Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*

*Part 4- Above Emotions and Morality is... Will?*

I stare down at the quivering rain droplets on my arm. My body is shivering. It shivers when I'm cold. Why am I so cold? My other arm is noticing the texture of the fabric covering my legs. So this what moisture feels like. These old memories came to me but they didn't feel like mine. I sat there trying to calm my body with the mental exercises I was taught. Soon I hear a rhythmic tapping that grew louder in succession. The door in front of me creaks open to reveal Robin holding a human sized cloth. He steps forward and extends the cloth closer to me. I grip the cloth and felt my hand grow warmer. In fact, my body stops shivering as I pressed my face into the cloth. Robin sat down on his "bed" next to me. He opened his mouth for a few seconds before closing it again.

"I'm sorry Robin. I... I really-"

No. I can feel the spasms. The same spasms from this morning. They were returning. I cannot talk. I need to fight it.

"It's all right. I know." After a brief pause he asked me, "How are you?"

I hug myself as hard as I could to keep the spasms down. But it is no use. I could feel the fluids building up before my vision became blurry. It is happening again. Then I feel a grip on my left arm right before Robin brings me closer to him.

"It's alright," he said. "I can't even imagine what you're going through. No one should have this kind of experience."

For a while we stayed quite. Neither of us said anything. Eventually I grew calm enough to say this.

"Go ahead. Ask me what you want."

"What do you remember?"

"I remember everything. Every moment. I remember more than I want to."

"That's good. It's important."

"Why?"

"So you can figure out where to go from here."

I have never felt like this before. I knew I never wanted to feel like this. But I feel like this because I did what I wanted. Was this some kind of punishment for it?

"She cared about you Robin. She really did."

"I know. But I also knew this could happen. Worse case scenarios. We push them so far out mind that... You did what you could."

I stayed silent. At this moment, I did not trust myself. Whatever I say could make things worse for both us. But I had to say something. Something simple and honest.

"Thank you for coming Robin. I really needed you there and you came."

"Of course," he replied with a smile. "I doubt you could recall a time when I wasn't there for you."

He's right. In all of the memories in my head, there wasn't a single moment when Robin was any less than a good friend. Even if I cannot explain everything to him, maybe he would still...

"I will do what she wanted. I will continue working and improving what we've built together."

"Is that what *you* want?"

"Yes, it is. This is my will."

Robin stands up and turns to face me. For what felt like an eternity, he just stares at me. It was as if he was waiting for me to blink. I didn't.



"You know" he began. "There was a time when I thought you were strange, almost alien. But soon I began to see how brilliant you are, how much you care, and how you kept driving yourself for your goals. I'm not sure if any of this is right or why you would potentially put yourself through..."

Robin abruptly stops himself. He cleared his throat before he starts talking again.

"What I mean to say is you are more human than I may ever be. So if this is your will, then I will help you through it."

He reaches down and places a hand on my shoulder before saying, "Do you understand, Alicia?"

"I understand."

Then I stood up and embraced Robin. Maybe everything I am doing is wrong. It could be that everything I do from here on out will bring me back to this pain. But I did not come this far to just stop. My name is Alicia and I will advance this world. This is what I want. If what I am doing is unethical, then I guess being human is unethical. Therefore...

*Alvin Gladson Varghese, c/o 2020*



*got s6 bob – Alex Diaczok, c/o 2020*

*Untitled - Tessa Lewitt,  
c/o 2021*



### **Blanched Bones and Dusty Miller**

Fuchsia trumpets herald the foxglove's beauty atop a climbing spire. Each spire ends four feet in the air, but towers like the legendary beanstalk over the peonies and begonias huddled below. At the base of the foxglove ancient Greece is revived as fuzzy acanthus-like leaves unfurl to support the Corinthian column above. These supports have been planted in anticipation for this moment of forgiveness.

As part of my daily routine I admire my masterpiece. Inspired by Van Gogh and his twisting shadows, I have brought his *Starry Night* to thrive below my bay window. I've made improvements though. My homage is not mysterious and dark, but colored as if by Matisse: orange poppies clashing with blue hydrangeas and gold hibiscus with silver dollars.

George would be proud. Even the George I came to love in those final months. If it weren't for his familiar smile, I could have never loved that pale, coughing stranger, as he slid down the gullet of his inclined hospital bed. I brought his art books to comfort him, but he was too nauseous to care. And yet whatever pained him as he vomited and moaned and convulsed was worse for me. Selflessly he noticed my pain, and that's when he provided the solution to my suffering.

"Gardening," he said. "Let each hole you dig and every plant you settle create a beautiful place for me to return home to when this is all done. This is how you can help me."

I remember replying that I'd never gardened a day in my life. He laughed. I remember laughing with him. I now realize he already knew the truth. Where did he find the strength to carry on the charade? Is it this strength that has inspired me, this strength that has brought me to my chance at salvation?

I think back a year ago to when my task began - when he was still alive to respond to my questions and offer guidance. I still have the colored-straw hat George gave me when he saw how tan I was getting. My color must have shocked him since ashen bodies awaiting organ donors or



judgment were all that surrounded him in that miserable ward. I wore the hat at first to make him smile – a smile I often used to identify him – but later told him the hat looked ridiculous and stopped wearing it. In truth, I didn't like the constant reminder in my vision that he was out there dying.

At first I was building a shrine for him to return to and begin the healing process with, but I now realize I was building a hedge maze to get lost in. The hat was a breadcrumb, and I never intended to come back.

Family and friends would stop by our house with flowers and cards for George. Jack, our nephew, painted himself with Uncle George as they walked around the city's sculpture garden like they had done so many times before. I, like Jack, thought that day would come again too. When he first became sick, I would take the well-wishers over in groups to the hospital so they would provide George with their love and hope. I thought that would be enough. But as the months dragged on I couldn't bear to see his slow decline. Soon I stopped escorting them over to visit George. I told everyone that he was too sick and needed his rest. They listened to me at first, but then they started asking questions and eventually began to visit him without me. Who knows what they told him? That I didn't love him? That I just wanted him to die so I could get on with my life? George knew that wasn't true, but did he still think that at the bitter end when I still couldn't muster the strength to stand by his side?

I ran from my stranger until he died. I had hoped he could find me without my help. Love had weakened me when it was all he had to keep him strong. I deserted him because it hurt too much to see him, to think of him, to love him. And so he wasted away all alone.

I now close my eyes and wait for my husband to find me. This is all for him. I want him to come back so we can talk about art. I want his arms back since the columns I've planted can no longer support me. I don't think I can go on by myself anymore with all the weeds I have pulled and the

holes I have dug. The wind, a warm zephyr, momentarily chases away the creeping soreness climbing up my arms. I open my eyes in relief, but then it starts its ascent again at my toes.

My knees ache so I sprawl out on the grass, awaiting my fate like the Chians that Delacroix immortalized. At least their suffering ended in the arms of lovers. I abandoned mine.

The wind builds, but it's colder now. This isn't right – this isn't what I wanted. I squeeze my eyes closed. I apologize a thousand times for my actions, but he doesn't forgive me. The tightness is still there in my chest: a ball of scrunched-up linen sheets with white knuckles.

Opening my eyes, I scan my perfect garden as I lay down. Yet now everything is sideways: an M.C. Escher print without the staircases for reference. I right myself and look for signs of George. The dusty miller's stark white could be his smile, the Japanese maple that amber glow to his cheeks after he'd been laughing for too long. But then again, maybe the dusty miller is nothing but the hospital walls, the red maple but blood-flecked pallid lips after a bout of coughing - air and vigor rushing from a fetal form.

I follow one of the foxglove stalks to the tip and shudder. I realize they are the bells in the church steeple that overlook where he is buried. This garden is a graveyard, built from my own regrets. The peonies are my upturned face in shadow as the stalks grow taller and complete my prison.

*Charles Tsouvalas, c/o 2020*



Baseball, Santo Domingo  
- Madeline Adelman, c/o 2021

## The Garden

As the sun peeked over the horizon and began to cast life across the fields the gardener took a moment to himself- mornings were always so meditative for him.

He had learned many lessons, made innumerable mistakes and helped others over his years of gardening, but that morning he was thinking back to when he first began to learn himself. The most important lesson, he felt, was to take time to assess his garden and reflect on how he was taking care of it. Even though he was armed with the knowledge and the tools, no two gardens were the same. The seeds, soil, compost and the gardener himself are constantly changing from year to year. Constantly assessing the quality of his tools, the climate and his methods were imperative to make each garden the best it can be. The gardener also knew the importance of identifying questions and solutions that stem from his assessments- and sought help when he needed it. Gardening was a demanding job, but the lessons one learns by practicing it year-to-year root themselves in all facets of life.

Gardening was his profession, and he felt that he should uphold it, whether he was in the garden or not. He felt the qualities that made him a good gardener- accountability, integrity and collaboration- also enriched his life outside the garden. Holding himself accountable to spend the necessary time caring for his plants everyday just as he holds his appointments with friends and family. Doing his work well, avoiding shortcuts and admitting to his mistakes just as he is honest and open with his companions. Sharing his bounty and helping others with their gardens just as he tries to build communities around him. His profession was his identity, and he wore that hat with pride. There was, however, more to gardening than just the seeds and the soil, just as there was more to life than being a gardener.

He had been in the garden for two-hours already and fatigue loomed over him. He

welcomed it. A little hard work was good for the body and the mind. The mentally and physically staid life was not the life for him. Gardening itself is all about balance.

Cultivating a mini ecosystem that balances itself requires the right amounts of water, sunshine and nutrients. Although the gardener enjoyed gardening, he also enjoyed his activities outside the garden- his own personal ecosystem. He knew the value of spending time with his friends and family, taking care of himself physically and resting sufficiently. And the wonderful thing he recognized, is that when a system is well-balanced all the facets can synergize with each other. Friends and family help in the garden, they enjoy a meal together and they strengthen their emotional bonds, which leads to a fulfilling life in perfect homeostasis between hard-work and pleasure.

As the coolness of the early morning faded away and he felt the first drop of sweat bead on his forehead, his body welled with emotion. It was at that moment he realized there was no other profession he would rather pursue and back to work he went with the morning sun beaming with pride over all his accomplishments.

*Peter Dimitrion, c/o 2023*



*Untitled - Tessa Lewitt, c/o 2021*





Untitled - Tessa Lewitt, c/o 2021

## Golden Bright

### *Preclinical Reflections*

I think home is just the right combination—a beautiful, magical place; wonderful friends who challenge you and support you; and the perfect time. A fleeting, ephemeral time that only few of us are lucky enough to realize we're in the midst of before it's over. That fluid, malleable time when who we are is still becoming who we think we're meant to be, and the people and places around us either stifle us or allow us to grow, when our ideals are forged and re-forged as we're exposed to more of the world around us.

It's hard not to feel stagnant after that time is over, and suddenly everyone seems cemented into the track they've chosen in life. I watch as some of those friends lose the glimmer in their eyes, worrying that the future is no longer shining with the endless possibilities we dreamed for ourselves. We hunker down onto our own paths, our own tunnels to struggle through before reaching the other side. I observe as some of those around me allow

their hopes of changing the world settle into complacency, and making it through the day; as their optimism is replaced by cynicism, and they start calling it "being realistic" instead. Some of those friends who made our home have scattered across the globe like dandelion spores on the breeze. Daily contact turns into monthly, or biannually. The golden futures they envisioned seem tarnished now that they've arrived, and upon closer inspection, fool's gold may be all they see.

But *I* still hope, *I* still dream. Does that make me a fool? Too much of an optimist?

I don't think so. This optimism is guiding me through my own path, and I still have faith that it will be worth it when I reach the other side.

We're so used to achieving—setting that next goal, giving everything we have to get there, and patting ourselves on the back when we do—but we all still have that fear. What happens if we reach it and it doesn't give us that feeling we hoped it would? When we have neglected some parts of ourselves, and allowed them to atrophy?

But maybe the happiness we thought our goal would bring can come in different forms. Maybe not the ones we expected, but maybe better for not having been planned. We can find it in the small moments of human connection, the moments of comfort we provide for each other, for our patients. If we're lucky, we'll get to keep some of those amazing friends we made with us, and new people will enter our lives. People who remind you that you're not alone in feeling this, who

make you believe that the light at the end of the tunnel can indeed be golden-bright again. People who pick you back up when everything weighs you down, people who take your hand and tug you toward the future that can still be golden, if only we remember to keep dreaming, keep believing we can make the change we thought we could. And maybe then we'll recapture that feeling of home, in a new iteration—one that has evolved as we have.

### *Clinical Reflections*

I can see it now. The light emblazons all that is around me. It is dim no longer. As I draw nearer to the end of the tunnel, the path sloping downward, gaining momentum, the sun shines in over me.

I'm not alone here. My friends are with me. I see some of those I've cared for in the wards making their way out into the light too. Some linger behind, not ready to leave, or maybe even turning back. But I try to bring them with me. I pull them gently forward by their hands, as those who came before me pulled me with them.

I can see it now. The future came upon me before I realized it was here. We're doing it now.

...

Every day now I find joy in my work.

I find meaning.

I find it in the patient who tells me he waits for me to come by every morning, because he knows I'll be the first to see him. The one who

tells me he'll miss me when he leaves, first to his long term care placement, and then likely to his final resting place.

I find it in the tough veteran who cries to me about missing the funeral of his nephew because his cancer has him weak and bed bound. Who is embarrassed to show emotion, but is comfortable enough to do it in front of me.

I find it in my patient who is in her final week, whose family hasn't made it to her bedside. But I am there. A girl just starting her journey, and a woman nearing its close. I hold her hand in the end.

I find it in the young girl who has endured things no one should ever have to, in helping to give her back the autonomy over her own body which was taken from her so cruelly.

Every day now, I understand why I had to struggle through the long hours of studying, of sacrificing all else in the sake of attaining this knowledge.

I understand now, when I can come up with a diagnosis for a patient and give them answers with my team. When I can identify what test to order, what maneuver to do, what question to ask to shed light on their problem.

All of it was necessary. And now I remember everyday why I dreamed of doing more, as I strive to be better. To do more for my patients, to be more, to know more.

The tunnel was difficult, yes, but necessary.

And now I will be there for those still hoping to get to the other side, and those who have no hope left at all, whether they be classmates, colleagues, or patients, struggling with stress, anxiety, burnout, failing health...

I will be there to remind them.

The future can always still be golden bright if we make it so for ourselves.

*Elizabeth Warbasse, c/o 2021*

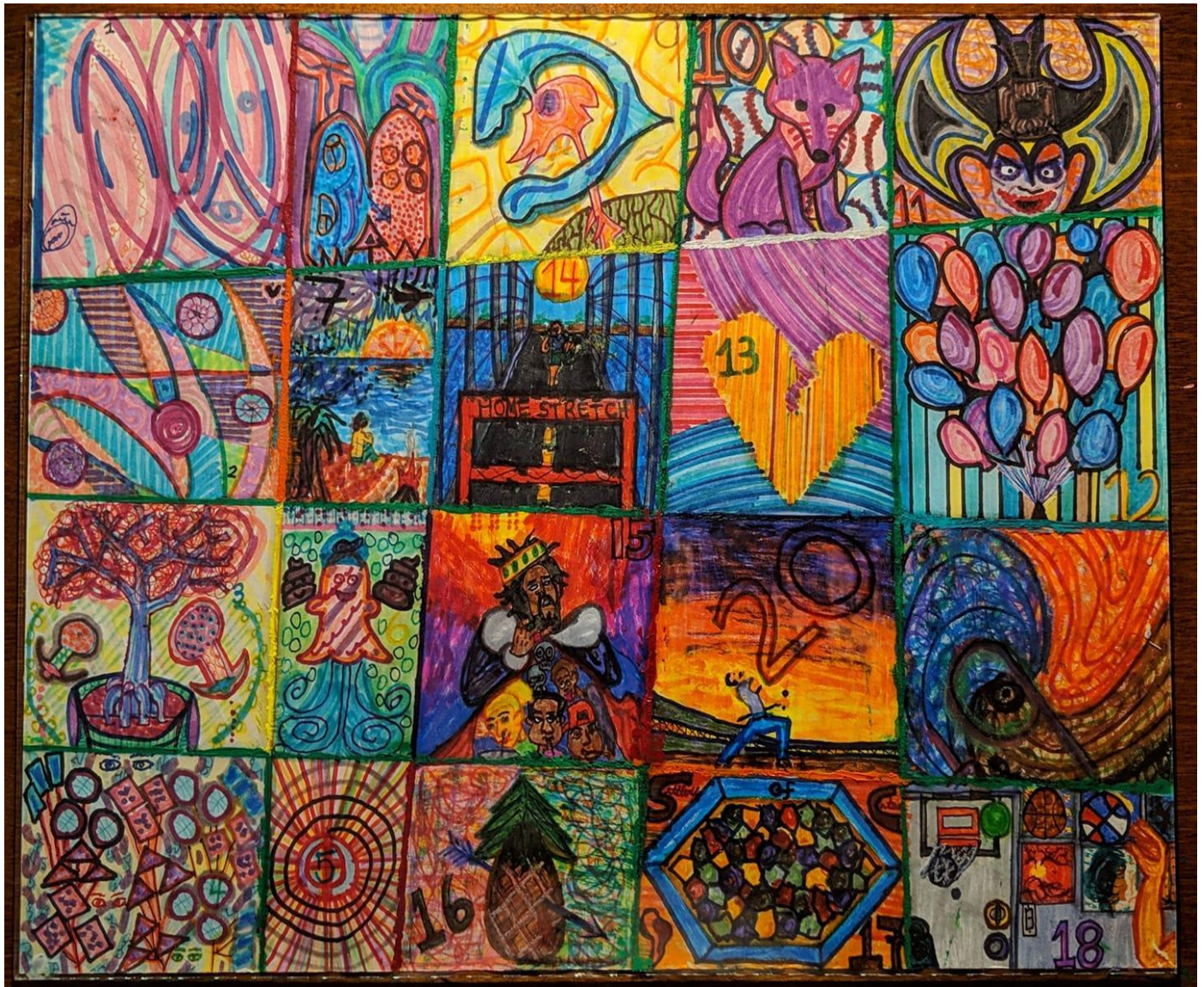


Czechian Canal –  
*Urvashi Gupta c/o 2023*

Cinque Terre, Riomaggiore  
- *Madeline Adelman, c/o 2021*







My 20 Days Before Step – Alex Diaczok, c/o 2020

## **To the loved ones of our anatomical donors,**

Through our year one anatomy lab coursework, I spent a lot of time reflecting on the privilege it is to learn anatomy with an actual human body. The process of dissection allowed us to appreciate the complexity of how our bodies work and marvel at their design.

We got to see some incredible things, but it often felt like anatomy lab was a strange dance between keeping a posture of reverence and professionalism for the task at hand while simultaneously taking delight in the process of learning. In the case of my group's donor specifically, we slowly got a more complete picture of the cancer that ended her life. As we moved through our dissections, we were thrilled to visualize the pathology, see what structures the cancer interfered with, brainstorm how it might have been treated, or how it might have affected her bodily function. By the end of our time with our donor, we got a better view of her tumors better than her doctors.

We would get so excited about how unique it was to see this pathology, but then realize that this thing we were so happy to see had caused tremendous suffering in our donor's life, and that excitement would give way to respect. We saw the physical manifestations of disease, but we did not get to see how our donor coped with bad diagnoses, or how she leaned on the emotional support of her providers and her family. We couldn't understand the effects that her loss had on her family or her friends. We were able to examine the details of what was happened in her body, but at the end of the day we would never have the opportunity to really know her.

When I first walked into the anatomy lab, I felt a mix of thorough apprehension and terror, but also unfettered eagerness. At the beginning it felt like something I was not at all qualified for. Who gets to do this? More to the point why am *I* able to do this? Why do I deserve this opportunity?

By the end of lab and after hearing letters from the families of our donors, the answer to that question seemed pretty clear: we had this opportunity because our donors believed in us enough to give us this opportunity. They knew that it would enhance our education, make us better physicians, and result in higher quality of care for our patients. They wanted their final act to advance the future of medicine, and I hope our gratitude to them is apparent. I hope that our work in the lab would have made them proud, and I hope they would be proud of the physicians we become.

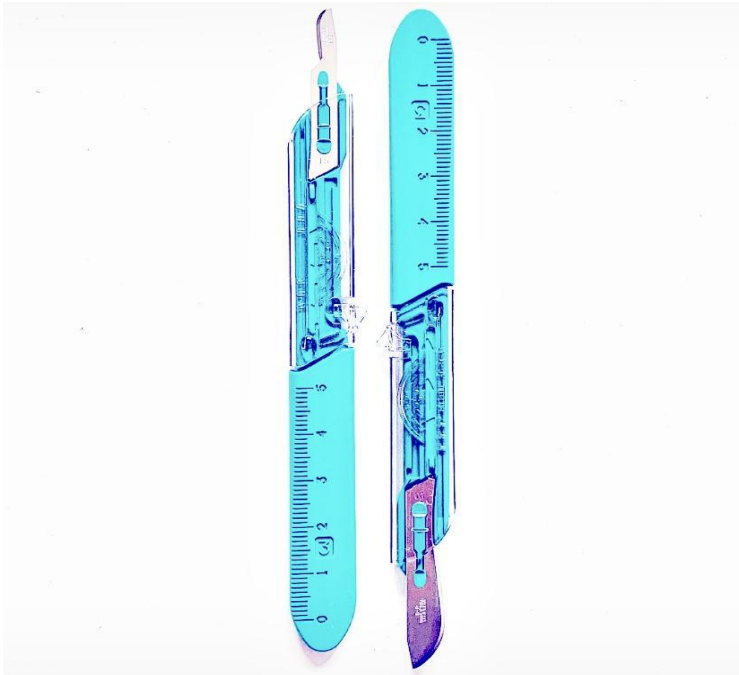
This past October my grandpa died at the age of 94 and I took a couple days off of school to be at his funeral. Even with the time I had to look at his face, and be near his body, and carry his casket as a pallbearer, the loss still didn't seem real. When I woke up at his house the next morning, I fully expected to see him at the breakfast table, having totally forgotten why the whole family had gathered in the first place. It was difficult enough for me to grieve in those structured, personalized, ceremonial settings where I knew where his body was. It must be even more difficult to process grief without physical remains, and moreover knowing those remains are still around somewhere.

So lastly, on behalf of the class of 2022, thank you to the families and friends of our donors for bearing through the ambiguity of the donation process for the sake of our education. I hope we have honored the sacrifices that *you* have made for our education, and I hope our future work as physicians honors the gifts that your loved ones gave us.

With Appreciation,

*Michael Ray Moentmann, c/o 2022*





Untitled - Morgan Ellis, c/o 2020





*Respite – Ryan Kelly, c/o 2022*



*Carefree Sunsets – Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*





Over the Rainbow - *Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*





*The 313 – Urvashi Gupta, c/o 2023*



*Park Bench Views – Shelby Freeberg, c/o 2023*





*Starry Night in Detroit - Alex Diaczok, c/o 2020*